

MINUTES
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 24, 2016
Woonsocket Middle School @ Hamlet Building
60 Florence Drive, Woonsocket, RI 02895

Call to Order by Chairman Soren Seale at 7:00 p.m. in Open Session

Moment of Silence

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call by Superintendent Dr. Patrick McGee:

Soren Seale, Chairman	Present
Donald Burke	Present
Susan Pawlina	Present
Valerie Gonzalez	Present
Paul Bourget	Present

PUBLIC GOOD & WELFARE:

Mike Harris, Teacher Assistant, Woonsocket Schools: Stated that he is concerned about his job status, saying that he received a lay-off notice dated July 29th for the 2016-2017 school year. The letter said that he would be required to bid on an open position at the job fair being held on Aug. 5, 2016, (a list of positions available will be emailed and updated at the job fair), and apologized for any inconvenience this has caused. He has 14 years in the Woonsocket school system and this has caused him nothing but distress. He has been through eight lay-offs. Harris stated that he was a paraprofessional that pushed for all-day kindergarten and has been in all-day kindergarten classroom for two years. He and the teacher worked together great and worked very hard to collaborate, which you don't get with every teacher. Mr. Harris was visibly upset and said he went to see Mr. Wolfgang on August 19th. Mr. Wolfgang told him to call him on the following Tuesday. He did so and left a message for him since he wasn't there. He is still waiting on the status of kindergarten and has yet to get a phone call from Mr. Wolfgang. Harris said that Wolfgang had originally told him that he "couldn't give him an answer" and proceeded to call into question Mr. Wolfgang's competency as Human Resources Director. Chairman Seale told Harris that "Mr. Wolfgang WILL call you tomorrow first thing in the morning". "That is not the answer. He dropped the ball. He should be held accountable. I went onto SchoolSpring on August 19th and the positions were posted showing they are available immediately! He has time to go onto SchoolSpring to post these positions but no time to take care of his own employees! I would like the courtesy of a phone call or an email" ranted Harris. Seale thanked "Mr. Mike" as he is called and asked him to please call Mr. Wolfgang tomorrow morning.

Roxanne Carey, Vice President, Woonsocket Teachers Guild: Addressed the WSC about what's happening with the kindergarten issue, saying they have been all summer for the enrollment numbers to come in. She thought that this may be why Mr. Wolfgang couldn't give Harris an answer. "The WTG does want the kindergarten positions posted because we need to get these kindergartens in place so our members know where they are going."

RECOGNITIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS: Dr. Patrick McGee, Superintendent

Dr. McGee announced that school starts on Wednesday, August 31st but not for everyone. He reported that many teachers and administrators have been working hard during the summer participating in professional development to develop curriculum. He thanked Jenny Chan-Remka for her hard work with teachers and staff across the district and he's very excited for the start of school. He announced the schedule for students and which students will be starting on the 31st and which students will be starting on 9/1. McGee told parents they could find this information on the district website also. Aug. 31st is for grades K – 9 (8/31 is for Kindergarten students with the last name A-L; 9/1 is for M-Z). On Aug. 31st students in Grades 1 through 5, 6 through 8 at the middle schools, and grade 9 at the high school will also attend. Students in Grades 10-12 will attend their first day on 9/1. Mr. Seale asked if kindergarten A-L attend on 9/1. Dr. McGee said "no". McGee added that teacher orientation takes place on Monday, August 29th and district PD takes place on Aug. 30th.

Motion to approve and place on file: P. Bourget

2nd: D. Burke (Unanimously Approved)

#6) Discussion/Approval on Bid #17-12 – Athletic Medical Supplies: P. McGee

Motion to approve: P. Bourget 2nd: D. Burke Roll Call Vote: 5 yes APPROVED

#7) Discussion/Approval on three (3) Elementary Special Education Resource Teacher positions: P. McGee

Motion to approve: S. Seale 2nd: P. Bourget Roll Call Vote: 5 yes APPROVED

Dr. McGee distributed a handout showing the cost of the positions and cuts that would need to be made to cover the added cost. Mr. Seale asked Dr. Janet Sullivan if these positions are compliance-based, and she explained that they are. Sullivan stated that previous to last year elementary resource teachers received pay for overages in contact hours. That has been taken away with a Memo of Agreement and with the change in the way we pay for contact hours, these teachers have come to her in tears saying that they can't meet those requirements. Now they only get overages if they have over their caseload of 31. One teacher may meet with each student one hour per week for a total of 31 hours, but another teacher may have students that average 2 or 3 hours each a week for a total of 90 hours. Dr. Sullivan reported that research was done and it showed that three teachers are needed to cover those extra hours. She also reported that each resource teacher filled out a survey at the end of last year regarding their students and their competency levels, etc.

Motion to approve seven (7) special education teacher assistant positions: S. Seale 2nd: V. Gonzalez
Roll Call Vote: 5 yes APPROVED

Dr. Sullivan said that the way these positions can be paid for is to bring back students from out of district and the resulting tuition that would be saved. Mr. Burke asked Brad Peryea to review the handout they received. Peryea noted that the total cost of \$502,894 (3 special ed teachers = \$238,056 + 7 teacher assistants = \$264,838) could be offset by not filling the two WMS Deans of Students @ \$227,142 and one custodian @ \$58,327-----positions that were approved by the WSC at its last meeting. In addition, anticipated increases in Medicaid Billing of \$122,500 and out-of-district tuition savings of \$94,845 would cover the remaining cost.

Mr. Bourget commented that "this is the kind of fiduciary oversight that I had been hoping to see in previous years. It's great to see. These positions are critical and we are making room for them by cutting back on less critical needs." He was also glad we are doing this now and the WED budget will not be disturbed. Ms. Gonzalez observed, "Looking at this concept, it's probably easier to send kids out of district, but we want to teach them." She commended the people that will be hired to do that and thanked Dr. Sullivan for the time and research she did and hard work to make this determination. Mrs. Pawlina said, "At the last meeting, we approved two deans of students and a custodian, but I think that the bodies in front of students is a better way to use these funds." She does, however, think that we should look to replace these positions in the future. Mr. Seale was disappointed that they voted on something at the last meeting that is now being nixed. He was concerned about the change in direction from one meeting to the next, but he wants to put all our resources in the classroom and thinks it's an excellent use of them. Mr. Burke asked why they picked these positions to cut out and if it was because they hadn't been filled yet. Mr. Peryea said, "It's not that they aren't important. It's more of an issue of priority." Mr. Bourget added that if they had had all the information at the last meeting, he believes they wouldn't have voted for the other positions. They just received the information now and are going with the higher priority positions.

Dr. McGee said, "I'm not saying we are going to lose the two deans of students and custodian position. We have to see where we stand with the budget. It's my job and Mr. Peryea's job to be fiscally responsible. We need to make some hard decisions and we are out of compliance with regards to these students. I don't want to put us in the position where we are running a deficit. I won't do that. Woonsocket has the highest teacher/student ratio in the state." Mr. Seale responded that there needs to be a proposal to withdraw the two dean of students and custodian positions at the next meeting, adding that the sole ability to hire and fire rests with the Woonsocket School Committee.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Dr. Patrick McGee, Superintendent

Dr. McGee reported on several capital projects (by school) that were started this summer, including the high school library carpet being replaced, the library being painted and equipped with new computer furniture. The high school auditorium has a new stage floor and new curtains are coming in. AC compressors have been replaced and roof repairs have been done (on-going). Landscaping has been done at the high school, Coleman, Savoie, Citizens, and Pothier. The cafeteria was painted at Citizens, as well as the hallways at Pothier. He noted that there has been a bad traffic jam with parents dropping off and picking up at Pothier/Citizens schools, so the fences have been moved and new fences put up for students to move safely. Globe has new floor tile in the cafeteria and the playground has

been resurfaced and landscaped. Painting and landscaping has been done at Bernon Heights, as well as Harris Elementary. The hot water tanks at the WMS have been repaired along with landscaping. Dr. McGee is very proud of how the schools look so far and thanked Mr. Fontaine for coordinating all of this work. "It has been a team effort with the principals and everyone this summer." Mr. Seale noted that 2.5 years ago we replaced the modules in the water tanks at the WMS because of the water discoloration. Dr. McGee told him that he would have Mr. Fontaine address this at the next meeting. Ms. Gonzalez asked about the computer servers and the ventilation issues. McGee said it is part of the 5-year plan, but he has spoken to Mr. Notarianni and they agreed that something needs to be done soon. Mr. Bourget spoke about the ceiling tiles being replaced in the cafeteria and the library first versus the rest of the building at the high school because events are held and collations take place in these areas. Dr. McGee agreed and said they will be discussing doing this. Ms. Gonzalez said they just finished fixing the roof and are waiting to make sure they aren't leaking anymore before replacing the tiles. "You are right, and so far so good," said McGee. Mr. Peryea said that some repairs have been made to the high school roof. "Hopefully, we will be able to receive bond money soon to replace the roof," he added.

Motion to receive and place on file: V. Gonzalez

2nd: P. Bourget (Unanimously Approved)

SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD & WELFARE:

D. Burke: Since this was the last meeting before school starts, Burke welcomed back everyone for the new school year. He hopes that everyone is energized and excited. "It's a new page on which we write—a fresh start, etc. Staff and faculty will be greeted by many improvements performed over the summer to make the schools a better learning environment for all. Special thanks need to be given to Dr. McGee, Mr. Peryea, and Mr. Fontaine for their leadership and also to the support staff and hired workers who completed these tasks."

Motion to adjourn at 8:00 p.m.: P. Bourget

2nd: S. Pawlina (Unanimously Approved)

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle
Substitute WSC Recording Secretary